

**Remarks by**

**US Ambassador to Azerbaijan  
Baku, Azerbaijan**

**“16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence”  
campaign launch conference**

November 21, 2016, 10:50

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you this morning in kicking off this 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, another piece of the international effort to boost our work to combat all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

Violence against women limits their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Violence against women is quite simply wrong. Still, one in three women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. I daresay most of us know women who have been abused physically or psychologically by a close family member or an acquaintance. This campaign draws attention to all victims of gender-based violence, including those whose lives have been cut short due to our failure to protect them.

This campaign also allows us to honor the work and efforts of many government agencies and organizations, as well as affording an opportunity to redouble those efforts.

The U.S. Government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Nations Population Fund work together with Azerbaijani public and private institutions to fight gender-based violence. Through the U.S. Government's Combatting Gender-Based Violence Project, we work in partnership with the Government of Azerbaijan to prevent gender-based violence. In this regard, I especially want to flag the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs as well as civil society organizations, gender-based violence activists and many other people who relentlessly strive to respond to and fight gender-based violence and raise to awareness about this issue in Azerbaijan.

Among the tools we are working together to create is a unified gender-based violence database as well as a national referral and response mechanism that will help protect victims of gender-based violence and will also help bring perpetrators of such violence to justice. Our programs also ensure women are protected, by working to strengthen the legal and policy environment in Azerbaijan. To give just one example – 16 government Family Support Centers will receive assistance and counseling services due to this project.

The United States also applauds the Government of Azerbaijan for addressing this issue with the adoption of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence. In this regard as well I want to thank the Government of Azerbaijan for its collaboration with the U.S. Government, with other international development agencies, and with civil society organizations who are advancing women's empowerment.

Let me close by stressing this campaign is an appeal to all of us to act promptly. A country, a nation severely hobbles itself if half of its population is denied their full rights to education and employment, and is denied a life free from fear. We must address discriminatory attitudes that still exist in our societies, and attitudes that result in people looking the other way when they hear about gender-based violence and discrimination. Investing in the education of girls and women is one of the most effective ways to fight against discrimination and to empower women. We need to work together to keep girls in school and let them learn. We need to empower women further to become leaders, peace-builders, breadwinners within their communities, whether in the United States or in Azerbaijan.

Only when we take steps to protect the rights of women can we hope to obtain gender equality, can we obtain the equality of all people in a society.

Thank you.